THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE,

ILLUSTRATED AND RECOMMENDED

IN A

SERMON,

DELIVERED ON

WEDNESDAY the 30th of APRIL, 1788.

AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD JEWRY, LONDON,

TO THE SUPPORTERS OF A

NEW ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

AMONG

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

By A. REES, D. D. F. R. S.

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A

SERMON, &c.

PROVERBS xix. 2. *former part.*

ALSO, THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE IT IS NOT GOOD.

THE book of Proverbs contains a collection of important and uſeful maxims, dictated by judgment and experience, and deſigned for regulating the conduct and promoting the happineſs of mankind. They are the reſult of a very extenſive and accurate acquaintance with human nature and human life; with the powers of the mind and the eſtabliſhed courſe of the world. The more attentively they are examined in their reference to the frame and ſtate of man, ſo

much the clearer muſt be our conviction of their truth and utility. They have this advantage, however, to recommend them, that their importance and obligation, both as principles of judgment and rules of practice, are eaſily diſcovered and readily acknowledged, as ſoon as they are propoſed. This is a circumſtance, which muſt appear to be of peculiar moment, when we conſider, that they are intended for univerſal benefit, and that they are eſſentially connected with our moral conduct and ſupreme happineſs.

Theſe obſervations may be very juſtly applied to the maxim of the text, in which Solomon, by uſing a negative form of expreſſion and by thus adopting a very familiar figure, more forcibly inculcates the neceſſity and the advantages of knowledge.

The knowledge to which he immediately refers is, without doubt, that which is of principal importance to man, as an intelligent, accountable, and immortal being;—that which is neceſſary to

to direct his practice and to ſecure his felicity: or, it is ſuch a knowledge of God, of his perfections and character, of his will and laws, and of the means of obtaining his favour, as is ſufficient to render men capable of religion and virtue, and to guide them aright in the way of duty and happineſs.

A ſoul without this knowledge, ſo congruous to its intellectual and moral powers and ſo requiſite to their proper exerciſe, improvement and perfection, is the image which Solomon preſents to view. How unnatural and monſtrous does it appear! what a variety of painful reflections does the contemplation of it inſtantly ſuggeſt! we turn away from it with averſion and horror; and the more we conſider the native dignity of the human ſoul, its diſtinguiſhing faculties and the apparent deſign of its formation, ſo much the more muſt we be humbled and grieved by the thought, that it is deſtitute of knowledge; or of thoſe principles and rules of conduct, upon which its perfection and happineſs depend. Hiſtory and experience concur with an

attention to the nature and powers of the human mind in evincing the importance and utility of religious knowledge: and the truth of the aſſertion in the text is ſo obvious and ſo generally allowed, that it requires no proof.

One great object of education and of public inſtruction is the diffuſion of this kind of knowledge;—and it is an object, which, in preference to every other, claims the utmoſt exertions of our wiſdom, benevolence and zeal.

But though the prevalence of religious knowledge demands our principal regard, becauſe men of every rank and condition are intereſted in the benefits that accrue from it, yet our attention ſhould not be confined to this ſingle object. Knowledge of every kind is agreeable and uſeful; and thoſe who have ability and opportunity ſhould be encouraged in the purſuit of it. In an age of general enquiry, the means of mental improvement ſhould be extended as much as poſſible. They ſhould be eaſy of acceſs. Every impediment to the uſe of them ſhould be removed;

removed; and they ſhould be guarded with all imaginable care from the collateral evils that have ſometimes attended them.

No profeſſional reputation, nor, indeed, any conſiderable credit and influence in many departments of buſineſs can be acquired or maintained, in the preſent day, without accompliſhments of literature and ſcience, which were little regarded in ſome former ages.

At a time, when the ſovereign of an extenſive empire had not learned to write; when our Britiſh Alfred had not acquired the knowledge of his alphabet 'till he was 12 years old; and when the Clergy could hardly read, much leſs underſtand, the common ſervice of the Church: is it any wonder that ignorance ſhould have been no diſgrace, and that knowledge ſhould have been generally held in low eſtimation?—At a time, when the ſcience that was cultivated was trivial and unintereſting, and conſiſted chiefly in an acquaintance with terms of art and in an inveſtigation of occult qualities and abſtract

abſtract notions; and the more uſeful ſtudy of the operations of the human mind and of the phenomena of nature was neglected; can we be ſurpriſed, that the number of thoſe who engaged in ſuch frivolous and unprofitable diſquiſitions ſhould be comparatively ſmall, and that this kind of ſcholaſtic philoſophy, as it was called, ſhould contribute ſo little to the general inſtruction and benefit of mankind?

It required powers of genius and a vigour of mind, which rarely occur, and of which Friar Bacon was a ſingular inſtance during a long period, to deviate from preſcribed modes of ſpeculation and ſtudy; to break through the ſhackles that are impoſed by authority and cuſtom; and to brave calumny and perſecution, the horrors of a priſon and the danger of death, in the purſuit of truth and ſcience. But the difficulties and diſcouragements, that have obſtructed the ſpread of uſeful knowledge, were not peculiar to the dark ages, to which we have now referred. Notwithſtanding the evident advantages, which the cauſe of general literature derived

rived from the facility of diſperſing books by the invention of printing, from the ſpirit of emulation excited by the revival of learning in Europe, and from the Proteſtant reformation, yet there were many prejudices and hindrances, which prevented the full effect of theſe important and valuable advantages, and which were not eaſily or ſpeedily removed. Lord Bacon, in his admirable eſſay on the advancement of learning, has recited and obviated a variety of popular objections, that have been urged by Divines, Politicians, and men of buſineſs, againſt the importance and benefits of general knowledge. To him we are chiefly indebted for rouſing into exerciſe and directing in its operations that ſpirit of literary and philoſophical enquiry, the beneficial effects of which are perceived and experienced in our own day. The progreſs of this ſpirit has been ſlow and gradual. It has been, in many inſtances, unduly reſtricted and controlled. But it is now triumphing over every kind and degree of oppoſition. It is diffuſing its influence through the various claſſes of mankind. The human mind, animated by this ſpirit,

rit, feels and aſſerts its native and unalienable independence. It has thrown off its chains, never more to reſume them: and the conſequences muſt be favourable, not only to literature and ſcience, but to truth and religion, to liberty and human happineſs.

There never was a period, in which the propoſition of the text might be more generally applied, and in which perſons of different ſtations and profeſſions would be more ready to acknowledge, that " for " the ſoul to be without knowledge it is " not good", than the diſtinguiſhing period of light and freedom, in which our lot is caſt.

The NEW ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION among PROTESTANT DISSENTERS was eſtabliſhed under a full conviction of the truth of this maxim, in the latitude with which it is now applied. To extend and perpetuate the benefits of knowledge is the laudable deſign of its founders. How far *it is likely* to anſwer this purpoſe, they ſubmit to the candid judgment of thoſe, who are acquainted with the principles and

and plan upon which it is eſtabliſhed, and with the mode in which it is conducted. How far *it will actually accompliſh* this deſirable and uſeful purpoſe, time muſt diſcover. Whatever be the event, the object is laudable: and we have reaſon to hope, that the bleſſing of Providence will crown the undertaking with ſucceſs.

What I farther propoſe is, to illuſtrate and evince the advantages of knowledge in general, and of religious knowledge in particular.

It is needleſs to remind any who now hear me, that this Inſtitution was formed, partly for the education of Miniſters, but principally with a view to the inſtruction of young perſons, who are intended for civil life. The utility of knowledge, in the comprehenſive ſenſe in which the term ſhould now be uſed, to thoſe who are deſigned to be public teachers of truth and religion, will be univerſally allowed: nor would it become me, before ſuch an audience, to

enter into a particular diſcuſſion of the ſubject in this view of it. We ſhall, therefore, direct our chief attention to young perſons of the latter deſcription, and endeavour to evince the benefits of that enlarged and liberal education, which the Inſtitution profeſſes to provide for them. That we may arrange the obſervations that have occurred to us on this ſubject in that order, which ſhall beſt aſſiſt us in making a direct application of them to the purpoſe for which they are adduced; we ſhall illuſtrate theſe benefits in their reference to perſons deſigned for civil profeſſions or employments, at *three* diſtinguiſhing periods or ſtages of their life. The *firſt* period is that, in which they are introduced to this Inſtitution, and retain their connection with it. The *ſecond* is that, in which they ſettle in the world. And the *third* is the period of their retirement from the buſy and active ſcenes with which they ſhall have been converſant.

In the *firſt* of the periods which have now been recited, the parents and guardians of youth have often been at a loſs how

how to diſpoſe of them with ſafety and advantage, till they are fit for purſuing the courſe of life to which they are devoted. The part of their education which uſually employs their earlier years, and which is proſecuted at a public grammar-ſchool, or under a private tutor, is compleated. They have attained an age, and probably a degree of improvement, which make them deſirous of a removal, and of aſſociating with perſons of years and acquirements ſimilar to their own. Nor can it be thought any reflection on thoſe who have had the charge of them from their infancy to this period, if we ſhould ſay, that the ſyſtem of education and diſcipline which is adapted to children, is not ſo well ſuited to the views and diſpoſition of thoſe who are advancing towards maturity; and that it is deſirable neither for the teacher nor his ſcholar, to prolong their mutual connection much beyond the period of which we are now ſpeaking.

This is the age, and theſe are the circumſtances, in which the ACADEMICAL

INSTITUTION offers an *aſylum* to young perſons. *Here* they are introduced into connection and ſociety with thoſe of years and knowledge, equal, if not ſuperior, to their own. From intercourſe with ſuch, from their example, and from the influence naturally acquired by greater maturity of age and judgment, and an approved conduct, they will derive a benefit and pleaſure which no other ſituation can afford them. *Here* they will find an accommodation in every reſpect adapted to their years, and that kind of combined and vigilant ſuperintendence and government, which will ſecure their virtue, and conduce to their happineſs. But it is not merely a place of ſafety in a period of danger, which the founders of the New Inſtitution have prepared. They have provided employment, ſuited to the genius and inclination of the young perſons committed to their care; —employment at an interval of life, which is of great moment to their future character and proſpects;—and employment of ſuch a kind, as will afford both pleaſure and profit.

It is needleſs to ſay, that the intellectual powers are gratified and improved by exerciſe, and that they acquire ſtrength and vigour by uſe. To thoſe who have been betimes accuſtomed to think, and judge, and reaſon, theſe ſeveral operations of the mind will be familiar and eaſy. Practice will form and fix a habit, which will be found of great utility in future life. The attention and application which are excited by emulation, and a deſire of improvement, and which the variety of objects comprehended in a courſe of liberal education requires and promotes, will diſpoſe and prepare young perſons for the aſſiduity and perſeverance, upon which their advancement in the profeſſion or buſineſs to which they are devoted muſt chiefly depend. Having found by their own experience, in the purſuits of literature and ſcience, the benefits of reſolution and diligence, and fully apprized by a review of the difficulties they have overcome, and of the knowledge they have acquired, that no good can be gained without labour, and that no difficulties are invincible to the reſolute and perſevering; they will come forth into the world

world with principles and habits, which cannot fail to influence their conduct in any ſtation that is aſſigned them. Young perſons, whoſe minds have been inured to exerciſe, whoſe time has been fully employed, and who have been accuſtomed to domeſtic diſcipline and order, will be qualified for any ſituation, in which their friends may think proper to place them. They will be guarded by inclination and habit from that indolence and diſſipation and irregularity of conduct, which are ſo dangerous and detrimental; and they will be diſpoſed to transfer the attention and diligence, with which they have proſecuted mental accompliſhments in general, to the particular objects that belong to the ſphere of life for which they are deſigned. To theſe objects, whatever they may be, they will direct their views and purſuit with a maturity of judgment, a ſteadineſs of purpoſe, and an aſſiduity of application, which will very much conduce to their ſucceſs.

Beſides, the knowledge, which they have an opportunity of acquiring, comprehends a variety of ſubjects, adapted to the

the occupation or purſuit in which they may be engaged. The ſtudy of the languages, of the ſciences, and of the polite arts in early life, is a neceſſary qualification for the learned profeſſions, and for many ſtations of public truſt and uſefulneſs: and there are various branches of knowledge, which a compleat courſe of education includes, that are of great importance to thoſe who are intended for commercial life. It is needleſs to deſcend to particulars. It will be ſufficient to obſerve, that the founders of the ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION have been deſirous of rendering its benefits as extenſive as poſſible. It is their aim to qualify young perſons for appearing in the world with reputation and advantage:—and they are of opinion, that the local ſituation of their Inſtitution is ſingularly favourable for this purpoſe.

The utility of their deſign will be farther evinced, if we anticipate the benefits which young perſons are likely to derive from their knowledge at that period of life, when they ſhall leave this Inſtitution and ſettle in the world.

With

With pleaſure will they review thoſe years, that have been devoted to the cultivation of their minds, and receive thoſe teſtimonies of approbation, to which their conduct and improvement ſhall have intitled them. With claims on eſteem and reſpect, founded in their irreproachable character, exemplary diligence, and diſtinguiſhed attainments, will they enter on the public ſtage of life; and whatever may be the rank or ſtation in ſociety which they may be deſtined to occupy, their mental and moral endowments will recommend them to perſons of diſcernment and integrity much more effectually than any external advantages, to which their birth or fortune may intitle them. The knowledge they have acquired will add dignity and luſtre to any diſtinctions of this kind that may deſcend to them from their anceſtors. It will *enſure* reputation, and *command* reſpect, in a much greater degree than any hereditary honour or affluence which they may poſſeſs, and which, with uncultivated minds, would merely render them more conſpicuous objects of contempt and reproach.

As

As for others, whoſe ſucceſs in the world depends more upon the exerciſe of their own ſkill and aſſiduity, their diſtinguiſhed talents will engage eſteem and confidence; give them an importance in the community which cannot be ſlighted; and contribute, in the uſual courſe of events, to their advancement and proſperity.

Beſides the reputation, that attends knowledge acquired in early life, it will afford an agreeable and uſeful employment in thoſe intervals of buſineſs, which perſons, who cannot avail themſelves of this reſource, know not how to fill up with advantage. It was a ſaying of Mr. Locke *, "That, in order to em-" ploy one part of this life in ſerious and " important occupations, it is neceſſary " to ſpend another in mere amuſements." But the amuſements to which he refers were ſuch as a fund of comprehenſive and diverſified knowledge ſupplied. Thoſe who have cultivated a taſte for learning,

* See his character by Mr. Coſte in his Works, vol. iv. p. 512. 4to.

and an acquaintance with the firſt principles of ſcience in their youth, have acceſs in riper years to ſuch an ample fund of inſtruction and amuſement. They are capable of directing their attention with profit and pleaſure to a variety of objects, as their inclination may prompt them, or the particular purſuit in which they are engaged may require. By thus varying their reſearches, they blend entertainment with improvement; and the powers of the mind are agreeably exerciſed, without being fatigued by conſtant application to any ſingle object. None can think it an inconſiderable advantage to be furniſhed with ſuitable employment for their hours of leiſure—with an employment that will make occaſional retirement from the hurry of the world deſirable and pleaſing; that will relieve and amuſe the mind, perplexed with anxiety or fretted by diſappointment in ſecular purſuits; and thus prepare it for renewing its exertions with vigour and activity in the common concerns of life.

Many

Many have had occaſion to regret their want of inclination for this kind of employment, and they have found it too late to acquire the neceſſary qualification and taſte for it, when their time and attention are devoted to other avocations. Few have had leiſure or reſolution to make any great proficiency in literature and ſcience, who have not begun betimes. The foundation muſt be laid in early life. The elements and principles of knowledge muſt be acquired in youth. When this has been the caſe, the ſuperſtructure may be gradually reared in maturer years. The work may be taken up at thoſe intervals that occur, and will be conſidered as an intereſting and agreeable amuſement. It will be agreeable, becauſe it may be purſued without difficulty and labour. It will be intereſting, on account of the beneficial effects that will naturally attend it. Theſe effects are various and important. Exerciſe within a certain limit—renewed and diverſified exerciſe—will ſtrengthen the powers of the mind; whereas indolence and inactivity will impair and debilitate them. There are many evils, incident

to every condition of life, for which it will furniſh an excellent antidote. There are many ſnares and dangers, which thoſe, whoſe attention is agreeably employed during the intervals of buſineſs, will avoid. It is a familiar obſervation, that, as cultivated ground has few weeds, a mind conſtantly occupied has little occaſion for uſeleſs and painful regret.

There is alſo a kind of reading, to which perſons of learning and ſcience will have no inducement to recur. To ſay the leaſt of it, it is unprofitable; and it has often proved injurious, eſpecially in the earlier period of life. But it deſerves to be principally conſidered, that the perſons of whom we are now ſpeaking, will be under no neceſſity of filling up their hours of leiſure with frivolous amuſements; much leſs will they be under a temptation of devoting them to pernicious gratifications. The employment of which they are capable, to which they incline, and from which they derive the greateſt pleaſure, is rational and manly; ſuitable to their intellectual and moral nature; and, inſtead of indiſpoſing them

them for the ſerious occupations of life, qualifies them for purſuing the buſineſs or ſervice aſſigned them with ſteadineſs and diligence. Whereas the amuſements and gratifications, too commonly recurred to by thoſe who neglect the culture of their minds, and who have acquired in early life no habits of ſtudy, no principles of ſcience, and no deſire of general knowledge, conſume their time, ſquander away their fortune, corrupt their integrity and deſtroy their peace, enfeeble every mental and moral power of their nature, impair their health, and unfit them for every kind of attention and application, upon which their credit and ſucceſs in life depend.

Beſides, thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by their mental accompliſhments will be prudent in the choice of their aſſociates. They will avoid the company of the unprincipled and licentious, and ſeek the ſociety of perſons, whoſe views and purſuits are ſimilar to their own, and from whoſe converſation they may derive inſtruction and improvement.

Knowledge

Knowledge is alſo favourable to virtue by the delicacy of taſte, elevation of mind, and refinement of manners, which uſually accompany it. There is a laudable pride, which ſprings from enlarged ſentiments and views. Perſons whoſe principal object is the cultivation of the underſtanding, will reverence the ſuperior powers of their nature, and ſhun thoſe exceſſes, and that meanneſs and brutality of vice, which degrade the faculties of the mind, and unfit them for the exerciſe of which they are capable, and to which they are habitually devoted.

Moreover, knowledge will qualify its poſſeſſor for eminent and extenſive uſefulneſs. His talents will command attention and reſpect, whatever be the ſtation in which he is placed, and enlarge his ſphere of public ſervice. His abilities and learning, united with integrity, under the direction of a well-informed judgment, and with the aſſiſtance of that knowledge of the diſpoſitions and characters of men, and of the courſe of events, which his intercourſe with the world will enable him to acquire, will be

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of ſignal utility on a variety of occaſions. To his family and friends; to his fellow-citizens; to the community in general; to the cauſe of truth and liberty, of religion and human happineſs, he will be a diſtinguiſhed ornament and bleſſing. In the Senate, or at the Bar, and in the popular Aſſembly, he will approve himſelf the ſtrenuous and inflexible aſſertor of the rights of mankind, and he will never deſert the ſacred and ineſtimable intereſts of civil and religious freedom;—thoſe intereſts which are preferable to every other, and which claim the chief concern of every enlightened and virtuous citizen. Theſe he will endeavour to the utmoſt of his power to preſerve inviolate, to extend and improve, and to perpetuate to future generations. In the Senate, at the Bar, and in almoſt every general aſſembly of our fellow-citizens, we may find perſons of this character, who have been formed for eminent ſervice to the age and country in which they live, by inſtitutions ſimilar to that to which our attention is now directed. Can the founders of the NEW INSTITUTION be chargeable with an unbecoming ambition,

ambition, or a groundleſs preſumption, if they indulge the hope of adding to the number of characters, ſo reſpectable and ſo uſeful?—If the plan of education which they have eſtabliſhed ſhould ſucceed to any conſiderable degree in producing the effects already ſuggeſted, they will have the ſatisfaction to think, that they have not laboured in vain, and that their attention and zeal have not been miſapplied.

But the benefits of general knowledge are not confined to that active period of life, which we have now been contemplating. There is another ſtage of human exiſtence, to which moſt perſons are deſirous of prolonging their journey, and for which prudence requires them to make ſuitable proviſion. With a view to this, men of every rank and ſtation are diligent in the exerciſe of their talents. Anxious for independence and eaſe in old age, and indulging the proſpect of enjoying the fruits of their ſkill and labour—the honour or the wealth which they have acquired—they exert every power, improve every opportunity,

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and rejoice in every degree of ſucceſs, which crowns their endeavours. At length the wiſhed-for period arrives; the period in which they withdraw from a ſcene of diſquietude and diſtraction, and in which they propoſe to ſpend their remaining years in the tranquillity of retirement.

How many have lamented the change, and turned a longing eye to the buſy ſcenes which they have forſaken. Dull and joyleſs have been their days of indolence and inactivity; and they have ſighed in the recollection of thoſe happy hours, in which their time and thoughts were fully engaged. With depreſſed ſpirits and increaſing infirmities, and without employment to divert their attention from the imbecillity and decay, which are the preſages of approaching diſſolution, how pitiable has been their condition! Unhappy in themſelves, they have been unpleaſant companions to thoſe with whom they have been connected. This is the time, in which the utility of knowledge will be very ſenſibly experienced. Knowledge alone, acquired in early life and im-

proved as opportunity offers in maturer years, can furniſh the amuſement and relief, which are adapted to this period. This will ſecure *otium cum dignitate*, honour and eaſe, in the decline of life. This will ſupply us with ſuitable objects to employ our thoughts and fill up our time. This will prolong our exiſtence, and increaſe our capacity of enjoyment by the variety of ideas and of agreeable reflections, which it will afford. This will quicken the current of life, when it begins to ſtagnate, revive the languid powers of nature, ſuſpend the ſenſe of increaſing debility, beguile the tedious hours of confinement and ſolitude, and adminiſter to our recreation and delight in thoſe years, when we ſhould be otherwiſe ready to lament, that there was no pleaſure in them. Knowledge will preclude the neceſſity of perpetually recurring to trivial amuſements, either foreign or domeſtick, which when eagerly ſought for and purſued to exceſs, are peculiarly reproachful to old age: and it will be an excellent preſervative from that undue indulgence of the inferior appetites of our nature, which has been ſometimes the wretched refuge of

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the indolent and unemployed, of the dejected and ſplenetic, at this period of life. The knowledge and experience of perſons in advanced life will render them inſtructive and pleaſing companions. Their kindred and friends will receive leſſons of wiſdom from their converſation; and deriving from their ſociety improvement and delight, they will dread and bewail the period of ſeparation. — We ſhall cloſe this part of the ſubject with the words of a popular writer. "How different "is the view of paſt life, to the man "who is grown old in knowledge and "wiſdom, from that of him who is "grown old in ignorance and folly! the "latter is like the owner of a barren coun-"try, that fills his eye with the proſ-"pect of naked hills and plains, which "produce nothing either profitable or "ornamental: the other beholds a beau-"tiful and ſpacious landſkip, divided "into delightful gardens, green mea-"dows, fruitful fields, and can ſcarce "caſt his eye on a ſingle ſpot of his "poſſeſſions, that is not covered with "ſome beautiful plant or flower."

SPECTATOR, No. 14.

The words of our text and the nature of the inſtitution to which this ſervice is appropriated, require our taking ſome notice of the advantages of *religious knowledge* in its reference to perſons, deſigned for the ſuperior departments of civil and commercial life.

I ſhould treſpaſs too much on the time, as well as on the candour and patience of thoſe who hear me, in attempting to do juſtice to the ſubject in this view of it. This, indeed, is the leſs neceſſary, as we are already in poſſeſſion of two excellent diſcourſes, delivered on former occaſions of this kind, in which the importance and utility of education, in its connection with religion and virtue, the principles upon which it ſhould be conducted, and the beneficial effects, which it is calculated to produce on the character of individuals and the general ſtate of the world, have been illuſtrated and enforced to the full ſatisfaction of thoſe, who have had the pleaſure either of hearing or of peruſing them. But as this part of education is of the higheſt moment, in the eſtimation of the friends and founders of the

the NEW INSTITUTION, we cannot allow ourſelves wholly to omit the opportunity that now offers of recalling your attention to ſome of the principal benefits, which are likely to accrue from it.

At a period of life, when the judgment is approaching to maturity, and before it has contracted any improper bias and prejudices, it is of great importance to direct and aid it in forming juſt ſentiments of the *principles*, *obligations*, and *evidences* of religion. That religion ſhould take poſſeſſion of the underſtanding and heart at this period, before they are perverted and corrupted, is of unſpeakable moment with regard to the conduct and happineſs of future life. The principles of religious truth, the affections of piety and the habits of a virtuous practice, that are *now* acquired and formed, will be likely to maintain a laſting influence. This is the age of reflection and enquiry; in which young perſons begin to claim and to exerciſe the privilege of judging for themſelves; in which they need inſtruction, and are moſt likely to profit by the aſſiſtance that is afforded them. This, therefore,

fore, is the age, in which they ſhould be directed and encouraged to make religion the ſubject of their diligent ſtudy and impartial examination; to inveſtigate the nature, evidence and importance of its diſtinguiſhing principles; and to adopt, without impoſition or reſtraint, thoſe ſentiments concerning diſputable doctrines, which are the reſult of an honeſt and deliberate inquiry. Their minds ſhould at this time be impreſſed with a ſenſe of the importance of religious truth in its influence on their temper and practice. With this view they ſhould be led to cultivate a prevailing love of it, to purſue it with integrity, to embrace it upon conviction, and to retain it againſt all oppoſing prejudices and intereſts, till farther information and new evidence conſtrain them to alter their opinion *. No poſſible danger can be apprehended from this unreſtricted and uncontrolled inveſtigation of religious truth.

* To love truth for truth's ſake, ſays Mr. Locke, is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the ſeed-plot of all other virtues. Letters in his works, vol. iv. p. 614.

truth. Many and invaluable are the advantages that will reſult from it in future life.

Whilſt the INSTITUTION provides young perſons with the means of inſtruction in the principles and evidences of religion, its regulations extend to the character and conduct. This is a circumſtance of great moment to thoſe, who are ſoon to be expoſed to a variety of ſnares and perils. Principles of piety and habits of virtue will furniſh a defence againſt temptation and danger. They will eſtabliſh a reputation, which will be no inconſiderable ſecurity in an intercourſe with the world; and which thoſe, who poſſeſs it and are duly ſenſible of its value, will not be eaſily induced to ſurrender.

It will be one important benefit of religious knowledge to perſons, thus inſtructed and diſpoſed, that it will render their religion a rational ſyſtem of faith and practice: and this alone is Scriptural religion; that which God requires and has promiſed to accept and honour. *Let every man* (ſays the apoſtle Paul) *be fully perſuaded*

perſuaded in his own mind *; and in another place, *in underſtanding be men* †. *Search the Scriptures* ‡, is the expreſs requiſition of Chriſt; and the Bereans ‖ are mentioned, with peculiar commendation, on account of their obſervance of this precept. A ſimilar praiſe, and the ſatisfaction accompanying it belong to thoſe, who examine and judge for themſelves in a concern of ſuch moment as religious truth and duty, and who are *ready always to give to every man that aſketh them, a reaſon of the hope that is in them* †. Whereas thoſe who neglect to form their ſentiments of religion upon inquiry and conviction, incur juſt reproach and cenſure. Religion is a ſubject, that ſolicits and deſerves an unprejudiced ſcrutiny; nor can any treat it with indifference and contempt without guilt and danger.

But it is of peculiar importance, that perſons deſigned for the ſuperior departments of life, and whoſe principles and conduct are likely to influence the judgment

* Romans, xiv. 5. † 1 Corinthians, xiv. 20.
‡ John, v. 39. ‖ Acts xvii. 11. † 1 Pet. iii. 15.

ment and practice of the multitude, ſhould make religion the ſubject of their deliberate examination. No other accompliſhments can compenſate the want of religious knowledge; and that plan of education muſt be eſſentially defective, which does not provide ſuitable means for acquiring it. This kind of knowledge lies at the foundation of a rational faith and virtuous practice. It is the only effectual preſervative from the extreme of enthuſiaſm, ſuperſtition and bigotry on the one hand, and from that of indifference and infidelity on the other. It is this knowledge alone, acquired betimes and diligently purſued, that can make perſons ſtedfaſt in their attachment to the principles and profeſſion of religion; ſecure them againſt the ſeduction of thoſe, who lie in wait to miſlead them; enable them to repel the objections that may be urged againſt their faith and hope by ſound argument; and qualify them for obviating the difficulties and ſcruples of the uninformed, and for recommending religion to their belief and practice. It is by the prevalence of this knowledge, and by facilitating means for acquiring it, that truth will be diſcover-

ed; that juſt ſentiments of religion will be promoted; and that the prejudices and impediments, which obſtruct the inveſtigation of religious truth, and deter men from embracing and adhering to it, will be gradually removed. Error and infidelity have been chiefly owing either to a neglect of cultivating this kind of knowledge at that period of life, which is moſt favourable to it, or to thoſe improper biaſſes and reſtraints, which have miſled and controlled youthful minds in their religious inquiries. Perſons, who are influenced by the awes of authority, and by the proſpect of worldly loſs or gain in their purſuit of truth, will be either deterred from an examination which may prove injurious, or proſecute it with a caution and timidity, which cannot fail to obſtruct their attainment of it. Whereas thoſe, who are conſcious of no undue bias, and who have nothing to hope or fear in their reſearches, will be moſt likely to ſucceed in their inquiries after truth. To them belongs the peculiar ſatisfaction of having no object in view but truth; and having embraced it from conviction, they will be diſpoſed to adhere to it, be

able

able at all times to defend it, and approve themſelves zealous and active in promoting it.

But the ſteadineſs and zeal, which a conviction of truth, thus acquired, is adapted to produce, are very different from that obſtinacy which precludes farther evidence, and that violence which recurs to unwarrantable methods of ſuppreſſing apprehended error. Religious knowledge will preſerve men humble under a conſciouſneſs of their own fallibility, and diſpoſe them to be candid and charitable in their temper and conduct towards thoſe who differ from them. The liberty they claim for themſelves, they will be ready to allow in its utmoſt latitude to others; and they will neither ſuſpect the integrity nor reproach the underſtanding of thoſe, who adopt opinions on religious ſubjects moſt diſſimilar to their own. With the ardour which they manifeſt in vindicating and promoting what appears to them to be evident and important truth, they will exerciſe forbearance, kindneſs and good-will towards thoſe, whoſe judgment they cannot con-

vince; nor think them leſs the objects of divine favour than themſelves. This is the amiable temper, which the benevolent genius of chriſtianity produces, and which an enlarged acquaintance with religious truth tends to promote.

Religious knowledge, accompanied with this ſpirit, will contribute to render its poſſeſſor an ornament to his profeſſion; and it will qualify him for diſtinguiſhed uſefulneſs in the ſtation aſſigned him. The more elevated and conſpicuous his ſtation, ſo much the greater will be his ability of ſervice, and ſo much the more extenſive the influence of his example in encouraging an attachment to the principles and profeſſion of religion. Adhering to it from conviction and choice; capable of juſtifying the ſentiments he has adopted, and the profeſſion he has aſſumed; and deriving advantages for uſefulneſs from his rank in life as well as from the ſuperiority of his underſtanding and the rectitude of his heart; he will reflect honour on the cauſe to the ſupport of which he is devoted, ſilence thoſe who pre-

preſume to reproach it, and encourage the reſolution and conſtancy of its timid votaries.

Religious knowledge will alſo contribute to the advancement of every perſonal virtue and excellence. Thoſe, who are beſt acquainted with the grounds of their faith and hope, and who have the moſt enlarged views of the objects and motives of religion, will be the moſt uniform and animated in their progreſs towards perfection.

Finally. To perſons of this character the proſpect of a future ſtate will be encouraging and delightful. *Now they know in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part ſhall be done away* *. The more they know of divine truth, the more deſirous will they be of extending their acquaintance with it, and the more painful their experience of the imperfection of their preſent knowledge. With pleaſure will they cheriſh the expectation of that period, in which doubts

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

doubts and difficulties ſhall no longer perplex and retard their inquiries; in which they ſhall be removed from ſcenes of darkneſs and error; and in which, with maturer faculties, and ſuperior means of improvement, they ſhall be making ſucceſſive advances in knowledge, goodneſs, and felicity, through everlaſting ages. This proſpect will reconcile them to the decays of nature, and approaches of diſſolution; and the more they have been accuſtomed to reflections and arguments that confirm their faith in futurity, ſo much the more reſigned and tranquil will they be in the hour of nature's laſt diſtreſs.

After the ſurvey that has now been taken of the advantages of knowledge in general, and of religious knowledge in particular, nothing need be ſaid in recommendation, much leſs in vindication, of an Inſtitution that has been eſtabliſhed for the laudable purpoſe of extending theſe advantages. None can avouch themſelves adverſe to the diffuſion of knowledge. All who have a juſt ſenſe of its value muſt wiſh its increaſe. So far

far from oppoſing, they muſt, without an obliquity of mind which no principle can explain or juſtify, approve and encourage a deſign that has this object. The only plauſible plea that can be urged againſt ſuch an Inſtitution is, that it was unneceſſary. But no one can urge this plea, or admit the ſufficiency of it, who conſiders the declared deſign of this Inſtitution, and the ſtate of Proteſtant Diſſenters with regard to public places of education, at the time of its eſtabliſhment. Such an Inſtitution, founded for the liberal education of young perſons intended for the ſuperior departments of civil life, did not exiſt amongſt us at the period to which we refer. And though perſons of this deſcription have occaſionally availed themſelves of the advantages that are to be enjoyed in Seminaries, profeſſedly eſtabliſhed for the education of Miniſters, and ſupported by voluntary contribution or endowment merely for this purpoſe, yet the number of ſuch perſons has never been very conſiderable. One Inſtitution, however, has been diſtinguiſhed in this reſpect; and the gentleman, who preſides over it, is intitled to

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public eſteem on account of the ſervice which he has rendered to the community by the education of ſeveral of our Lay-youth, as well as of our Miniſters *.

In ſuch circumſtances the Proteſtant Diſſenters needed an Inſtitution, the chief object of which ſhould be the education of young perſons, deſigned for civil life. And we may add, that thoſe Diſſenters, to whom this diſcourſe is particularly addreſſed, and with whom we are more immediately connected in religious ſentiments and worſhip, could not leſs than regret the want of an Inſtitution, which they might call, in a variety of reſpects, their own, and from which they

* The Inſtitution here referred to is that at Daventry, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Belſham, ſupported by Mr. Coward's truſtees for the education of miniſters. The Academy at Mancheſter, under the tuition of the Rev. Dr. Barnes, and the Rev. Mr. Harriſon, was eſtabliſhed after the period to which this diſcourſe refers. I am happy in the opportunity, which the mention of this Inſtitution affords me, of profeſſing, from perſonal acquaintance, my reſpect for the tutors, and for many gentlemen concerned in the ſupport of it, and of wiſhing ſucceſs to their laudable undertaking.

they might derive a ſupply of Miniſters, in or near the capital of the kingdom †.

† Such an Inſtitution would probably have been long ago eſtabliſhed, if the neceſſity of it, as far as the education of Miniſters was concerned, had not been ſuperſeded by the Academy, ſupported in London by the truſtees of Mr. Coward, and by the liberal principles upon which it has been conducted. From this Academy many of our congregations in London, and in different parts of the kingdom, have been ſupplied with acceptable and uſeful Miniſters, whoſe acquirements, character and public ſervice have done honour to the Inſtitution, under the patronage of which they were educated. When this Inſtitution was diſcontinued, it was natural for thoſe Diſſenters, who had been accuſtomed to think favourably of it, and who were convinced of its utility, to be alarmed in proportion to the concern they felt for the proſperity of the intereſt with which they were connected. Deſirous of perpetuating this intereſt, and apprehending that an Academy, in or near London, under the direction of perſons, agreed in their general ſentiments of religion with themſelves, would be of conſiderable importance for this purpoſe, they formed the plan of the NEW INSTITUTION, and ſolicited contributions for the eſtabliſhment of it. Thoſe with whom this deſign originated ſoon found, that the views of other perſons coincided with their own, and their ſucceſs exceeded their moſt ſanguine expectations. By a concurrence, which does honour to the liberality and zeal of Diſſenters, and of thoſe who have united with them on the preſent occaſion, they have been enabled to found an Inſtitution, which, they have reaſon to hope, will not only furniſh a ſufficient ſupply of Miniſters, but at the ſame time anſwer another very valuable purpoſe, by affording

Should it be ſaid, that our two Univerſities afford means of improvement adapted to the age and ſituation of thoſe to whom this diſcourſe principally refers, and ſuperſeding the neceſſity of other Inſtitutions, formed by the wiſdom and ſupported by the generoſity of individuals:—we need not recur to a variety of popular objections in order to refute this kind of reaſoning.—We need not depreciate the numerous and ſignal advantages which may be enjoyed by ſtudious youth in theſe venerable manſions of learning and ſcience; nor would it become us on the preſent occaſion to avail ourſelves of defects and imperfections in the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of education and diſcipline, which the friends and advocates of our national colleges have

fording the means of uſeful inſtruction to young gentlemen, who are intended for civil life. The union of theſe two objects appears to them of great importance, and likely to prove a public benefit. In forming their plan, both of education and diſcipline, they extended their views beyond the limited circle of their own connections; and now indulge the hope of ſerving the cauſe of truth, religion and liberty, among perſons of every denomination and profeſſion, and the intereſt of the community in general.

have both acknowledged and lamented ‡. Notwithſtanding many excellent regulations, and many powerful motives of allurement and of terror for enforcing them, irregularities unavoidably occur; habits of diſſipation and extravagance are contracted; and young men of ſpirit and fortune find it very difficult to eſcape uninjured. Parents are juſtly alarmed. They tremble in the proſpect of theſe ſcenes of danger; and experience, pro-

 bably,

‡ It muſt occur, however, to every perſon who impartially reflects on the nature of eſtabliſhments of this kind, and on the general alarm which is inſtantly excited by any propoſed alteration and improvement, that it is not eaſy to apply an effectual remedy to errors and imperfections, which time, and experience, and increaſing knowledge diſcover in the principles upon which they are founded, the laws by which they are governed, and the mode in which they are conducted. The hiſtory of the Univerſity of Cambridge, where a ſpirit of liberty and a zeal for improvement have been, for ſeveral years, renewing laudable, but hitherto unſucceſsful efforts, will furniſh numerous and recent facts in proof of this obſervation. See the Life and Works of John Jebb, M. D. F. R. S. lately publiſhed in three volumes, by the Rev. John Diſney, D. D. F. S. A. Thoughts on Subſcription to Religious Teſts, &c. in a Letter to the Rev. H. W. Coulthurſt, D. D. By William Frend, M. A, Fellow of Jeſus College, Cambridge. 1788.

bably, too ſoon convinces them, that their fears were not without foundation. Againſt theſe evils, however, it has not been unuſual to contraſt the honours and emoluments that are peculiar to our Univerſities: and in this reſpect they will always maintain an unrivalled ſuperiority to every other Inſtitution.

But whatever may be the advantages for knowledge or for advancement in the world, which theſe national eſtabliſhments may afford to ſtudious and aſpiring youth; they are annexed to a condition, which many, in this enlightened and liberal age, muſt diſapprove, and which none can ſatisfactorily vindicate. The condition to which I refer is that Subſcription to the Thirty-nine Articles, which is required in one of the Univerſities at the admiſſion of youth, and in both upon their obtaining academical degrees *. There are many members even

* At Oxford this Subſcription is required at the time of firſt admiſſion, or matriculation; and it is required in both the Univerſities of Oxford and Cambridge previous to

even of the eſtabliſhed Church, who think this a great evil. How little can young men be ſuppoſed to know of theſe Articles, when they are ſent from a grammar-ſchool to the Univerſity, or at the time of their taking their firſt degree? Some

to every degree, except at Cambridge, in the caſe of candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts. By a grace which paſſed the Senate, the 23d of June 1772, Subſcription to the articles was aboliſhed, and the following declaration ſubſtituted for it. "I A. B. do declare, that I am, *bona fide*, a member of the Church of England, as by law eſtabliſhed." The ſubſcription to this teſt is evidently no leſs objectionable than the other; becauſe it may be interpreted ſo as to imply, not only a conformity to the liturgy of the Church of England, as by law eſtabliſhed, but an approbation of its eſtabliſhed doctrines contained in the 39 articles. See Dr. Jebb's Works, Vol. III. p. 226, &c. Dr. Jebb obſerves in another place (Vol. I. p. 259, 260.) that many of the young gentlemen at Cambridge are, by privilege annexed to noble birth, allowed to take the degree of Maſter of Arts at two years ſtanding, whereas the perſons (thus apparently relieved) muſt neceſſarily reſide till they have nearly compleated four years. "Why (ſays he) ſhould the bachelors of muſic, of phyſic, and of law, be bound to the ancient formulary, and the bachelor of arts alone be releaſed?" Beſides, "degrees are the teſtimonies and rewards of literary merit; and ſhould therefore lie open to every ſon of ſcience, without diſtinction of party, ſect or nation. They are eſſential requiſites, in many inſtances, to the enjoyment of honours and emoluments in the liberal profeſſions."

Some perhaps have never read them, Others have never ſtudied them. All muſt be incapable of ſolemnly declaring or atteſting their belief of them †!

Thoſe who are intended for the Miniſtry are ſuppoſed to come to the Univerſity, in order to examine the ſubjects of theſe ſeveral Articles, or to acquaint themſelves with thoſe doctrines and duties of religion, in which from the nature of their office they are to inſtruct others. But before they begin their courſe of ſtudy and inquiry, they are required to teſtify their aſſent to that ſummary of faith which the Articles contain. They are admitted to examine the grounds and reaſons of their faith, on condition of firſt profeſſing it: and when they have declared that they believe, they are allowed to inquire what and why they believe. "They are thus taught (as Mr. "Locke obſerves ‡) rather to obey than "to

† See Dr. Jebb's Works, Vol. iii. p. 51. and Queries 6 and 7, p. 156.

‡ Works, Vol. IV. p. 540. 4to.

" to underſtand; and to uſe the learning " they have to juſtify, not to examine, " what their ſuperiors command." Such is the inverted order of faith and inquiry, in which men muſt ſtudy divinity, and acquire the right of officiating as divines, under the patronage of a national eſtabliſhment. The abſurdity and evil of this practice are very juſtly lamented.

The practice of Subſcription is ſtill more indefenſible with regard to young perſons, who are deſigned for civil life. The ſtudy of the Articles is no part of their aſſigned employment. Their views and thoughts are directed to other ſubjects of literature and ſcience. Yet ſuch is the conſtitution of our Univerſities, that no perſon is allowed to purſue theſe ſubjects, or to obtain the honours to which his age and proficiency entitle him, without acknowledging the dominion of the magiſtrate over his conſcience and religion, and previouſly declaring his aſſent to doctrines, which, to ſay the leaſt of them, are unintelligible and diſputable, and many of which are demonſtrably

ſtrably inconſiſtent both with reaſon and Scripture *.

What

* The impropriety of requiring ſubſcription in the circumſtances here alluded to, will ſufficiently appear from the following petition preſented to the Vice chancellor and Senate of the Univerſity of Cambridge, by a numerous body of under-graduates, in the year 1771. "Your petitioners apprehend themſelves, in conſequence of engagements entered into with the Univerſity at the time of their admiſſion or matriculation, to be under an obligation of devoting their attention to that courſe of ſtudies, which is recommended to them by their ſuperiors: that they are expected to employ themſelves in the purſuit of natural and metaphyſical knowledge; to improve themſelves in moral philoſophy, and to acquaint themſelves with the ſentiments and language of thoſe authors, who, in their time, were eſteemed the greateſt ornaments of Greece and Rome: that in conſequence of this multiplicity of academical engagements, they have neither the leiſure nor the opportunity of inquiring into the abſtruſer points of theology; that they, nevertheleſs, find themſelves under a neceſſity of declaring their unfeigned aſſent to a ſet of theological propoſitions, uſually called "the thirty-nine Articles of Religion," apparently of high argument and great importance; or of ſubjecting themſelves to a repulſe in their petition for a degree, which they have endeavoured to qualify themſelves for, with much trouble, and at no little expence. Your petitioners, therefore, intreat, if ſuch indulgence can be granted to them without infringement of the Univerſity Statutes, that they may be releaſed from the neceſſity of teſtifying their aſſent to the aforeſaid propoſitions; or, that ſuch timely

What a dread of inquiry does this rite of initiation produce! What a bias does it give to the judgment in its future reſearches after truth! How unfavourably does it operate as a check and reſtraint on men's undiſguiſed profeſſion of the ſentiments they adopt! And what temptation do the honours and emoluments connected with it hold out to "their "believing (as Lord Shafteſbury expreſſes "it †) to the full ſtretch of their reaſon!" What embarraſſment does it occaſion to the integrity of youthful minds! And in many inſtances how pernicious has been its influence, not only to the progreſs of truth, but to the honour and prevalence of religion!

Theſe are inconveniences and evils, which many perſons, of enlightened minds and invincible integrity of every profeſſion, muſt concur to lament. They

 cannot

timely aſſiſtance may be afforded in their reſpective colleges, as will enable your petitioners to ſatisfy their conſciences in ſubſcribing them."

Jebb's Works, Vol. I. p. 208, 209.

† Characteriſticks, Vol. III. p. 105.

cannot but lament, that Articles of Faith ſhould be thus incorporated with the civil rights of men, and the worldly emoluments of the ſtate; that religion and ſecular policy ſhould be thus blended; and that our youth ſhould be under any temptation to ſacrifice their judgment, in the moſt important exerciſe of it, to human authority—to limit their inquiries by a ſtandard eſtabliſhed more than two hundred years before they were born, by fallible men emerging out of the darkneſs of Popery, and enforced by a power to which conſcience is not amenable—to adjuſt their Creed by conſiderations of worldly honour and intereſt—and to declare their aſſent to doctrines which they do not underſtand, and which they are afraid to examine, leſt their faith ſhould contradict their profeſſion.

The requiſition of Subſcription in colleges of education has a natural tendency to degrade the majeſty and ſacredneſs of truth; to deaden that delicate ſenſe of integrity and honour, which ſhould ever be cultivated with aſſiduity and guarded with care in the minds of young perſons; and

and to render views of convenience and intereſt ſuperior to thoſe motives which conſcience and religion furniſh, and which are the only ſuitable enforcements of truth and virtue. The continuance of this practice, notwithſtanding repeated attempts to aboliſh, or at leaſt to reſtrain it, evinces the neceſſity of providing the advantages of education for young perſons, unreſtricted by an obligation ſo abſurd and ſo pernicious *.

* Could a late writer [a] prove what he has aſſerted, "that all good and wiſe men, in every age, have thought "it their duty to comply with the eſtabliſhed religion of "their country;" we might aſk, whether compliance, without examination and conviction, is a part of their duty, or an evidence of their wiſdom and virtue? If this is the caſe, it would be preſumptuous in young perſons, who are admitted into the Univerſities, to indulge ſcruples which are inconſiſtent with the character of wiſe and good men, and with the univerſally acknowledged obligations of duty. But when, with very little inquiry, they diſcover, that the Articles, to which their Subſcription is required, have been diſputed by wiſe and good men in every age, and that many perſons of this character have thought it their duty to diſſent from the eſtabliſhed religion

[a] See a *Letter from a Father to his Son at the Univerſity*, relative to a late Addreſs to young Students. Oxford printed, and ſold by Rivington in London, 1788.

To Proteſtant Diſſenters this has always been an inſuperable objection againſt our national Univerſities. Their principles

gion of their country;—when they are told by a celebrated hiſtorian[b], "that the forms of orthodoxy, the "Articles of Faith, are ſubſcribed with a ſigh or a ſmile "by the modern clergy;"—they will claim a right to heſitate and demur, and they will think it their duty to defer Subſcription, till they have had an opportunity of examining and judging for themſelves. And there are few parents, I apprehend, whether they believe the Articles or not, who would not approve the ſcruples of their children, and deem it reaſonable, that they ſhould not be required to declare their belief of any religious propoſitions, the evidence of which they had not ſtudied, and to the truth of which they could not more conſiſtently declare their aſſent than to the truth of a chapter in the Koran. There are few parents, who can wiſh to impoſe on their children, at an early period of their lives, an act in which their hands or lips are concerned without any concurrence of their underſtandings;—an act, which their maturer judgment may diſapprove, and which they may be under a neceſſity of deviſing pleas to juſtify or palliate, both to themſelves and others.

If Articles of Faith be conſidered merely as terms of peace, or if Subſcription to them implies no more (as Mr. Archdeacon Paley intimates[c]) than that the perſon who ſubſcribes

[b] Gibbon's Hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. V. chap. liv. p. 539.

[c] Principles of Moral and Political Philoſophy, Vol. I. p. 219, 8vo. edition.

principles exclude them from a ſhare in the honours and emoluments of thoſe public

ſubſcribes is neither a Papiſt, Baptiſt, nor an Anti-epiſcopalian, it is a matter of ſurpriſe, that the wiſdom of thoſe to whom the power belongs ſhould not have deviſed ſome other condition of admiſſion to the advantages and honours of our Univerſities, more directly appropriate to this purpoſe, better adapted to the apprehenſion of youth, and equally effectual for the excluſion of improper perſons. It is not eaſy to conceive, why Subſcription to a number of abſtruſe propoſitions, originally formed and authoritatively enforced for preventing diverſity of opinion, ſhould be continued, if its primary deſign is ſuperſeded, and young perſons, to whom objections may occur at the time of thus qualifying themſelves for inſtruction, or in a ſubſequent review of this act, are to be informed by thoſe whoſe judgment they honour, that they are not expected to believe, as truths, the propoſitions to which they declare their aſſent. When they read the Articles, if this be ever a part of the form of Subſcription (which is not always the caſe, ſee Jebb's Works, Vol. III. p 11. and Frend's Thoughts on Subſcription, p. 5.) and conſider the deſign for which they were compiled and enjoined, they are naturally led to imagine, that they ſubſcribe them as Articles of Faith; but they learn from ſome of their ſuperiors in knowledge and collegiate rank, that they are not required to believe what they ſubſcribe. In ſuch circumſtances an intelligent, reflecting and ingenuous youth muſt find himſelf greatly embarraſſed. He muſt feel a reluctance to declare his belief of what he has not examined, and does not underſtand; nor will any comment on Subſcription diſpoſe him readily to acquieſce in the obligation of ſubſcribing without believing. The Father, whoſe Letter to his Son has been already

public eſtabliſhments, which are guarded by Teſts and Subſcriptions. To theſe their youth can have no acceſs. The terms of admiſſion are ſuch as they diſapprove; nor can they conſent to impoſe on their children a burdenſome yoke, which neither they nor their fathers have been able to bear. The Diſſenters are therefore reduced to a neceſſity of providing for the education of their own youth; and in doing this, they are under no

already cited, will tell him (if he be not deſigned for the clerical profeſſion) that he ſubſcribes the Articles "as a "layman." In what reſpects the ſubſcription of a layman differs from that of a clerical perſon, it is not eaſy to underſtand; unleſs the latter believes or determines to believe what he ſubſcribes; and the former ſubſcribes without believing, or without thinking himſelf under any obligation to inquire what he has ſubſcribed. Let any impartial and candid perſon judge, whether this mode of ſubſcribing the Articles, without examining and believing them, or in deference to the judgment and authority of ſuperiors, has not a tendency that is unfavourable to religion and integrity; whether it is not calculated to produce in young minds an indifference about religious truth; and whether it is a proper introduction to thoſe ſtudies and inquiries, which a courſe of liberal education comprehends. The excellent Dr. Jebb has expreſſed his ſentiments on this ſubject in a manner, which deſerves the moſt ſerious attention of thoſe whom they immediately concern, in his Addreſs to the Gentlemen of the Univerſity of Cambridge. See his Works, Vol. I. p. 182—222.

no obligation of adopting any reſtrictions or regulations that are unfavourable to truth and liberty, to the rights of conſcience, and the ſacred intereſts of religion and virtue. Reſtrictions and regulations of this kind are inconſiſtent with their diſtinguiſhing principles; and there is no caſe, in which they are more unjuſtifiable and more injurious than in ſeminaries eſtabliſhed for the education of youth †. We need not add, that the Inſtitution,

† Beſides the objections, which many Proteſtant Diſſenters have often urged againſt ſeveral of the doctrines of the Thirty-nine Articles; they are more generally agreed in an oppoſition to the interference of human authority in the province of religion.—*One is their Maſter, even* CHRIST [d].—They acknowledge no other Lord of conſcience, and no other Lawgiver in the Chriſtian Church. They claim the right, which the Author of their intelligent nature hath given them, and which is confirmed by his revealed will, of judging for themſelves concerning all matters of religious faith and duty; and they conſider themſelves as accountable, in this reſpect, *only* to God. They cannot ſurrender this privilege of their nature as Men, and of their profeſſion as Chriſtians, the exerciſe of which is cognizable ſolely at the tribunal of an omniſcient Judge, to any power on earth: and while they regard the ſacred Scripture as a ſufficient rule of faith and practice, without any authoritative interpreter, they cannot ſubmit to the dictates and deciſions of

[d] Matthew xxiii. 8, 10.

Inſtitution, which now claims our attention, is free of acceſs to perſons of every religious denomination and profeſſion. The plan upon which it is eſtabliſhed, is liberal and comprehenſive, and

of fallible men. Whilſt they are diſpoſed, in common with others of their fellow-ſubjects, to *render unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's*—to pay that reſpect to the government and laws of their country which the public good for which they are inſtituted requires—they think themſelves bound, by the moſt ſacred and indiſpenſible obligations, to *render unto God the things that are God's*[e]. Under the influence of ſuch principles—principles which are perfectly compatible with the ſafety and proſperity of every civil intereſt of the community to which they belong;—they muſt diſapprove of Subſcription to all Articles of Faith, which are of human device and impoſition. The act of Subſcription would be, in their opinion, a tacit diſavowal of the ſole legiſlative authority of CHRIST; of the ſufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith; and of their own right of private judgment. It would alſo imply the acknowledgment of a dominion over conſcience, which, they think, no man, nor body of men, of any rank or deſcription, can juſtly exerciſe; and which is inconſiſtent with their own frame, as intelligent, moral and accountable beings, with the nature of religion, with the liberty with which GOD and the Goſpel have endowed them, and with the obligations of their Chriſtian profeſſion and character. Thoſe who are deſirous of a more particular account of the principles of Proteſtant Diſſenters, and of their objections to the conſtitution, liturgy and diſcipline of the eſtabliſhed Church, will

[e] Matthew xxii. 21.

and allows diverſity of opinion. Its founders and friends, principally concerned for promoting uſeful knowledge and religious virtue, apprehend no inconvenience from that uncontrolled liberty of inquiry and judgment, which they think it their duty thus to encourage, and which they are determined to maintain.

To perſons, differing in ſome ſpeculative opinions, but united in theſe ſentiments and views, and animated by a laudable zeal for ſerving their country and the beſt intereſts of mankind, this Inſtitution owes its origin, and that degree of ſtability to which it has already attained. With a ſteadineſs and perſeverance correſponding to the importance of the object, they have purſued the accompliſhment of their deſign. Encouraged by the good wiſhes and liberal

will find ample ſatisfaction in a work of long eſtabliſhed reputation, entitled, "A Diſſent from the Church of "England fully juſtified, &c." by the Rev. Micaiah Towgood. The ſixth edition of this excellent performance, with corrections and additions, was publiſhed in 1787.

assistance of the friends of science, liberty and virtue, they have proceeded with alacrity and pleasure; and the prospect of success has induced them to renew and continue every necessary exertion. Nor will those, who have distinguished themselves by their assiduity and zeal in establishing this Institution remit their attention to its future prosperity. We may thus reasonably hope, that it will be an extensive and permanent benefit;—that the favour of Divine Providence will rest upon it;—and that it will be the means of diffusing knowledge and piety, and of promoting truth, liberty and happiness in the present age, and through future generations.

To the parents and guardians of youth, the founders and friends of this Institution must now direct their views. *Their* concurrence is necessary for extending and perpetuating the advantages of knowledge. It behoves *them* to consider, that the honour and happiness of those, who are committed to their care, depend upon the early culture of their minds. Mental accomplishments, acquired

quired betimes, are of the greateſt conſequence to their uſefulneſs and enjoyment. Whatever be the ſtation for which they are deſigned, knowledge is deſirable and beneficial. And their attainments in literature and ſcience ſhould correſpond to their worldly expectations and proſpects. Religious knowledge is of the higheſt importance.—This will preſerve them from being *led away by the error of the wicked from their own ſtedfaſtneſs**. This will be the ſhield of their virtue through life, and the anchor of their hope, when life terminates. This will qualify them for diſtinguiſhed uſefulneſs on earth, and for ſuperior degrees of perfection and bleſſedneſs in a future world. Whether we anticipate the future ſcenes of their exiſtence in the preſent ſtate, or their eternal deſtiny, *for the ſoul to be without knowledge, it is not good.* It is unneceſſary, therefore, farther to enforce the wiſdom and duty of furniſhing them with the means of acquiring knowledge. No application of their wealth can redound more to the ſatisfaction of

* 2 Peter iii. 17.

parents, and to the honour and happineſs of their offspring.

I ſhall only add, that the proſperity of this Inſtitution will very much depend upon the application, improvement and exemplary conduct of the young perſons, for whoſe benefit it is deſigned. Their acquirements and character will eſtabliſh its reputation, and afford the moſt convincing teſtimony of its importance and utility. To them the beſt friends of the Inſtitution will direct their anxious attention. For their improvement in knowledge and eſtabliſhment in virtue, ſuch perſons will be affectionately ſolicitous. The ſame generous ſolicitude for the honour and happineſs of youth, and for the increaſing influence of rational principles of religion and liberty, which gave riſe to this Inſtitution, and which animated the exertions of its friends in its progreſs towards maturity, will continue to intereſt them in its ſucceſs. Every preſage of its proſperity will be part of their reward, and give them peculiar ſatisfaction. This reward, of high value in their eſtimation—this ſatisfaction, they will anxiouſly

anxiouſly ſeek in the improvement and exemplary conduct of the young perſons who ſhall be connected with it. To ſuch they will ſay in the proſpect of futurity, "Ye are our hope, *our glory and* "*our joy* †. Your concurrence is neceſ- "ſary to give full effect to the Inſtitu- "tion, which we have eſtabliſhed. If "ye cordially unite with us, nothing can "prevent the completion of our deſign. "If your attainments and character cor- "reſpond to the views and expectations, "with which this Seminary has been "founded; it can have *no enemies—none*, "whoſe oppoſition and reproach will "be worthy of notice. Its friends "and well-wiſhers will daily increaſe. "A conviction of its utility will more "and more prevail. Future ages will "derive benefit from it."

In a concern of ſuch moment to *you*, my much-eſteemed young friends! to the *public*, and to *poſterity*, there can be no reaſon for doubting your unanimous concurrence. Every ingenuous principle that actuates the youthful mind—that actuates *your* minds—forbids ſuſpicion, and

† 1 Theſſ. ii. 20.

and encourages hope. Let me intreat you, however, to remember, that ye are connected with an Inſtitution of recent eſtabliſhment; which, on a variety of accounts, will attract notice, and in the reputation and proſperity of which many perſons claim an intereſt. Theſe collateral circumſtances will, I am perſuaded, be incentives to your emulation and circumſpection; and induce you, as far as ye are perſonally concerned, to eſtabliſh the character of this INSTITUTION, as a Seminary of ſcience and of virtue.

Whilſt with a vigilance, which has your good for its object, the Governors and Tutors of the Inſtitution endeavour to the utmoſt of their judgment and power to guard againſt a poſſible evil, and are determined never to remi their attention and vigilance; they are happy in this opportunity of bearing public teſtimony to the application, improvement and irreproachable conduct of thoſe, who have been already entruſted to their care. May ye perſevere in this courſe, no leſs conducive to your own honour

honour and happineſs, than to the credit and proſperity of the Inſtitution, with which ye are connected! May the laudable ſpirit, which ye manifeſt, be tranſmitted to your ſucceſſors after you! May every College and Seminary for the education of youth, and every deſign for the advancement of knowledge, virtue, and human felicity, proſper!

THE END.

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